CONCLUSIONS

After having made a comprehensive survey of almost all the aspects of the temple architecture of the Salem region, it is now necessary that the conclusions drawn in the respective chapters of the work be given in a nut shell, so that one can easily know the importance of this study.

Conclusion is an essential part of any deep study because many unfamiliar aspects, controversies, arguments, opinions, explanations and presumptions would have been discussed in the study. The final result of such probes, sometimes, may appear ambiguous or vague to the reader of the subject. Therefore, the outcome of such studies have to be mentioned clearly in categorical terms. Therefore, the conclusions are a necessary part of any academic probe. In the following paragraphs, an attempt has been made to give conclusions of the work done by the author chapter-wise.

In the introductory part of the study, details about the geographical location of the Salem region and a historical perspective of the region is given in the beginning. The scope of the present research work is discussed. A brief survey of the work done already in the field is discussed. The region of our study, being a buffer zone, witnessed continuous interaction between neighbouring Tamil and Kannada cultures, best reflected in the art forms of the region. This resulted in the formation of new cultural trends and traditions. As the intention of this study is to probe into development of temple architecture and sculpture of the region, it is necessary to have an idea of the contemporary schools of art that existed in and around the region of study. This is helpful to understand the various nuances of the art forms of Salem region. Details about the mode of approach and method of presentation of the findings are given in the introduction.

Chapter one gives a historical background of the Salem region, beginning from the pre-historic times upto the end of Vijayanagara rule. The rule of the
royal dynasties like the Adhigamans, the Gangas, the Cholas, the Hoysalas and the Vijayanagara has been discussed briefly. Actually it is necessary to understand the development of temple architecture during different periods of history of the region, as such periods of development are identified with and named after royal dynasties that ruled over the region.

From chapter two onwards, a study of various important constituents of the temple building is undertaken item-wise. Chapter two deals with the ground plans of the temples of the region. While studying the ground plans, the morphological functions as in the existing temples are taken into consideration, because the Texts as such do not give the description of a temple plan or its nature or its form in the way in which the plans of the temples are available to us. Therefore, based on the existing models of temples, a study of different parts, of the temple beginning from the main shrine to prākāra are discussed in two parts. The first part consists of the study of temple components from garbhagṛha of the main shrine to the Amman shrine. The second part consists of other components, such as various maṇṭapas, halls, corridors, prākāra, gōpuras, etc., and other minor constructions in the temple complex. While dealing with this aspect, the etymology of the names given to such architectural members are discussed. The shapes of the plans, the form, their function, and the special features of each and every component of the temple are discussed. Variations, specialities, deviations from the Texts, if any, are all discussed. While discussing the plan of the architectural components, their interiors are also discussed. To avoid duplication of work, certain other aspects connected with the elevation of the interiors are also included in this part only. This description gives a comprehensive idea of all aspects of the architectural adjuncts, such as the plan, the elevation and also the interior decorations. This is also an analysis of the building and its various parts, built according to the ancient tradition, in the light of the modern building technology.
Chapter three deals with the constructional methodology adopted in building temples of the region. The temples of the region, basically belong to the dravidian style of architecture, which was the main style of architecture prevalent throughout south India. Therefore, examples from the regions outside the limit of our region are also sometimes taken into consideration to correlate or to emphasise certain technical aspects of the building technology of the region. The information available from the Texts is very limited, compared to the information available from the existing structures. Therefore, based on the available physical forms of the temples, the constructional methodology has been explained. The scope of the subject extends from establishing the orientation of the temple, to the installation of the finial at the top. The various methods used in the construction of the building, their advantages and disadvantages, importance and utility of such forms and their technical subtleties are also discussed. The change in the pattern of construction from time to time is also discussed. Existing as well as ruined temples are studied in a detailed manner to analyse the technology and mode of fabrication of such a design. From this, certain important aspects of the medieval temple architecture are revealed. One is, the use of arches in the construction of temples, the source of which was no doubt Islamic in nature. Besides this, another important technical aspect, drawn mostly from the European architecture, has also been analysed. This is the construction of suspended roof for the large naves of the temple halls. Certain unknown and unfamiliar facets of the construction technology have been noticed and explained for the first time, like the nikhātastambha, masonry engaged pillars, importance of vājana in the prastara, etc., are explained. This study also reveals that all the decorations of the outer wall surface including uttara (beam) part are all decorative in nature and none of them are functional.

Chapter four deals with the adhiṣṭhānas of the temples. The Texts on architecture deal elaborately the method of construction of adhiṣṭhānas, their different varieties, measurements, names, etc. The accounts given in them are,
many a time, ambiguous and confusing. Therefore, it is difficult to apply the
descriptions given in the Texts to the existing temples, because the architects
have taken liberty in the construction of the plinth of the temples. Architects,
many a times, omitted some of the minor mouldings in the construction of the
plinth, which actually are useful varying the heights of the plinth, on which
sometimes, the typology of plinths also based, in the Texts. Therefore, in the
present study, taking into consideration the major mouldings of the plinth, their
form, and total appearance and their decorations, plinths are identified as
belonging to any given type of the Text. In doing so, the etymology and name
given to the plinth or/and the meaning, literal or implied, of the names of the
plinth are considered for the identification. Plinths of all the temples of the region
are identified with their names in the Texts. This is an approach made for the first
time in the study of the temple architecture of the Salem region. Through this
method twelve types of adhiṣṭhānas are brought to light from this study. So also
the upapīṭhas constructed for the temples are also identified and studied. Besides
this, an overall picture of the adhiṣṭhānas mentioned in the Texts, their typology
and also their possible forms are described. Table giving the details of the
typology of the adhiṣṭhānas mentioned in various Texts is also prepared and
presented. From this study, it becomes clear that for the identification of the
existing adhiṣṭhānas of the temples, the main mouldings, their characteristic
features and their decorations are to be considered first. The measurements and
also the details of the minor mouldings play a lesser role in their identification.
This has been the opinion of the vāstu experts of the present day with whom the
author had many discussions.

Chapter five deals with the bhitti of the temple. Bhitti is the most
predominant part of the temple, but the āgamas do not give any specification
regarding the construction and decoration of the walls of the temples. They only
mention that it should be made of planks of stone or wood and they should be
decorated to please to the eye. In this study, therefore, a study of the morphology
of the bhitti is made in this chapter. The study reveals that like any other dravidian temples any other region and period, the temple walls of this region are also constructed. The decorations also are almost identical to those found in the neighbouring regions. However, the study has revealed that certain forms and motifs of decoration, unique to the Tamil idiom, were predominant in the region of our study though art forms special to Karnataka tradition had percolated to some extent into this region. To emphasise this point, the split pilasters of the kōśṭas of the temple walls may be taken first. It’s a known fact that kōśṭas of the wall have an architectural framework, consisting of two pilasters supporting a canopy. In the carving of the pilaster, the Tamil architects were different from their contemporaries of Karnataka. In the Tamil idiom, these pilasters are not carved fully, in the sense that they appear as though one full pilaster is spilt vertically into two and they are placed at the two sides of the kōśṭas. This was not the case with the Karnataka architects. The latter have represented these pilasters in full form on the two sides of the kōśṭas. This is a notable feature, which helps to differentiate the handiwork of the architects of the Tamil artists from those of Karnataka. The next part that deserves mention in this context is the carving of the kumbhapañjara and its variants on the wall as a decorative motif. Kumbhapañjara, it has been revealed in this study, begin to appear from the late Chola period and onwards. Varieties of kumbhapañjaras with all their decorative grandeur are found carved in this region. Interestingly this was not a motif preferred by the Karnataka artists. The Karnataka artists preferred to carve only the stambhapañjaras instead of kumbhapañjaras. The form and the metaphysical meaning of the kumbhapañjara are explained with the help of imprecatory verses found in literature and inscriptions. Further this study reveals that all the decorations of the outer wall surface including uttara (beam) are all decorative in nature and none of them are functional.

Chapter six deals with the prastara. Prastara is the entablature built above the architraves, both inside and outside the temple building. In this study,
the meaning and the significance of the name *prastara* has been etymologically and metaphysically explained. The various aspects of *kapōta* are discussed. The significance of the *vājana* of the *prastara* are also explained. While doing this, information from the ruined temples has been taken for study and the function of *vājana* is explained. The chronological development of the *kapōta* is discussed, and in particular the changing form of the *nāsis* is explained with the help of examples. A special method of carving *kīrtimukha* above the *nāsis* in the late medieval period has been explained for the first time with illustrations. This is the method of joining two pieces of stones through ridge and groove method for the carvings of *kīrtimukhas* above the *nāsis*. This method was used to economise on labour and material in the carving of the *kapōtas*.

The construction of *hāra* above the *kapōta* was an option left to the architect, therefore, many of the temples of the region are devoid of *hāras*, particularly on the main shrine. Changing pattern of the *hāra* from stone masonry to that of brick and mortar has also been studied and explained. Their decorative patterns are also described. The *prastara* in the interior of the temples is also studied in a detailed manner. The nuances in the construction of *prastara* noticed during different periods are explained. In the temples of early and medieval periods of the region, the construction of *prastara* in the interior is not seen, as the temples were all very small or moderate in their dimensions. During the Vijayanagara period large *maṇṭapas* were constructed with huge raised ceiling. In such places the entablatures were constructed for the nave of the hall to raise the height of the ceilings. The entablatures were provided with deep niches in which mythological incidents in relief or painting were depicted. In the study of *vitāna* (ceiling) various constructional methods adopted, like the *nābhicchanda* ceiling, the plain ceiling, the paneled ceiling, the coffered ceiling, are all explained with the help of illustrations.

Chapter seven deals with the *prāsāda* of the *garbhagrha*. *Prāsādas* possessing different *talas*, extending up to four, have been noticed. Almost all
these prasādas are identified as per the prescription of the Texts. From this it becomes clear that for the construction of the vimāna the architects have followed the prescriptions given in the Mayamata. This correlative study is done for the first time for the temples of the Salem region. It is interesting to note that majority of the prasādas of this region belong to swastika type. Solitary examples of few more types are also found. From this it becomes clear that the swastika type of vimāna was mostly preferred by the architects, for reasons not known. It is observed that, of the prasādas found, five are of stone and the rest are of brick and mortar. From this it becomes clear that during late Chola period the prevalent practice was to construct the prasādas of the shrine only in brick and mortar.

It is observed that of the seventy five prasādas found in the region only twenty have retained their original form, whereas rest are all modern constructions or reconstructions.

Chapter eight deals with the stambhas or the pillars of the temples of the region. The definition, etymology and textual meaning and prescriptions of the different types of stambha are discussed, identified and described. It is a known fact that the order or the shapes of the pillars changed from period-to-period and region-to-region, according to the taste of the society of the artist who produced them. The Texts, do give certain shape or mode of decoration for the carving of the pillars and many of these aspects are found carved in the temples of the region. A chronological study of the pillars of temples found in the region reveals that certain types of pillars that are mentioned in the Texts appear only in later periods, i.e., after the 14th century and not prior to that period. From this point it becomes clear that the Texts that mention these types of pillars are contemporary or later in time than the time of production of such pillars. It may be even possible that such types of pillars are interpolations into the Texts of the earlier period at a later time. The fact that they are mentioned in the Texts, clearly suggests that such types of pillars were introduced or interpolated into earlier
texts at a later date. The Texts that are mainly taken into consideration in this study are known to have been composed prior to 14th century. Mayamata is dated to 10th century. Mayamata mentions these types of pillars, but actually they are not seen before 14th century. It is a known fact that many prescriptions of Mayamata are found followed meticulously in construction of the temples of the region, but certain pillar types mentioned in the Mayamata are not at all found up to 14th century. Therefore, it is clear that certain types of pillar carving were interpolated into the Text of Mayamata at a later date. This is a clear instance to prove that the original Texts on vāstu have undergone many changes, interpolations, etc. after the date of their composition.

While studying the pillars of the temples of the region, it has come to notice that certain amount of hybridization of the Tamil and Kannada idioms has taken place in the carving of the pillars. This is particularly noticed in the pillars of Nolamba and Hoysala order of the region. The Nolambas borrowed the tradition of placing maṇḍi and phalaka from the Tamil idiom and at the same time decorated the shafts in the Chalukyan mode. The lion motifs of the Pallavas were also taken. They were reduced into miniature forms and are carved at suitable places in the shaft. Likewise, during the Hoysala period the carving of the central shaft of the pillars with minute decorative designs and beaded string festoons, making the pillar cylindrical at the central part, the addition of horizontal mouldings and grooves on the cylindrical portion of the shaft, all suggest Hoysala workmanship. These features are found in some of the temples built under the Hoysala patronage in the region. Another interesting aspect of the temples of the Salem region is that they contain certain of the architectural designs identified as those of the Vijayanagara style, during the pre Vijayanagara days itself. They are the citrakhaṇḍa type of pillars and the puspapāṭikas. Temples built in the region, definitely dated to 1131 A.D.-1183 A.D. (Kulottunga I Chola), possess citrakhaṇḍa type of pillars. This proves, for certain, that the citrakhaṇḍa type of pillars is an innovation of the Chola artists. Likewise, the
puspapōti ka capital that appears on these pillars and pilasters of the outer wall also belong to the Chola period only. The liberal use of citrakhanda type of pillars and puspapōti ka is prodigally seen in the Vijayanagara temples. During the Vijayanagar period, entire south India- south of Tungabhadra became one unit as far as the development of temple architecture was concerned. Therefore, throughout this land, a uniform type of architectural tradition prevailed and the temples and their architectural members of this period were more or less one and the same.

Chapter nine deals with the other architectural members of the temple complex. They include pranāla, dwārabandha, sōpāna, hastihasta, balipītha, dhvajastambha, puṣkarani, etc. All these members are studied and described individually. The antiquity of these parts, developments if any, their salient features, textual prescriptions, are all discussed. It is interesting to note that some of these architectural members such as pranāla, sōpāna, hastihasta and balipītha are built according to textual prescriptions. These are not only functional in their character, but are also decorative in their own right, and add beauty to the structure. These parts are regular features of dravidian temple complex. Therefore, their development and their salient features are highlighted. While studying this, it has been observed that the decoration of the hastihasta of the sōpāna contain figure sculptures that reflect the contemporary religious beliefs and practices of the society. These sculptural carvings were part of the rituals conducted frequently in the temple, therefore they are symbolically represented through sculptures at required places.

Chapter ten deals with the prākāras and the gōpuras. Texts deal with these aspects elaborately and mention different types of prākāras and gōpuras. Unfortunately, hardly any of the prescriptions given by the Texts are applicable to the existing models of the temples of the region. In the case of the prākāras, the Texts only prescribe that prākāras can be constructed in multiple numbers. Their function, their decoration and their measurements are also to some extent
furnished. Texts also give different names for the gateways of prākāras. Therefore, not much difficulty is faced in the study of the prākāras in the light of textual prescriptions. But in the case of the gōpuras it is difficult to correlate the textual typology with the existing forms of the gōpuras of the region. Certain prescriptions of the texts are obscure and ambiguous. Therefore, it is difficult to apply the textual prescription to the existing gōpuras. It is even possible that the prescriptions connected with the existing gōpuras of the region might have been lost to us during the course of time. Therefore, only the morphological descriptions of some of the important gōpuras are given.

Chapter eleven deals with the sculptures found in the temples of the region of our study. Sculptures are classified creed wise and are studied. Iconographical, aesthetic and decorative features of these sculptures are highlighted. The location of these sculptures in the temple complex, the tradition associated with the worship of these sculptures, their religious and ritualistic significance, stylistic trends, influences, if any, are also discussed. Some of the rare forms of the divinities have been studied in detail and their mythological and iconographical significance are highlighted. This remark particularly applies to the sculptures such as Liṅgōdbhavamūrti, Vishnu in the form of Nandi, Jwaraḥarēśvara and Mahiṣamardini. From this study it becomes clear that the sculptures of the region not only reflect the socio-religious milieu of the region, but also certain religious beliefs and preferences/practices of the people of that society. In the representation of such unique forms of divinities the sculptors have exhibited their imaginatory skill and artistic caliber, so that they satisfactorily fulfilled the cultic aspirations of the society.

The present study has brought to light a few big stone sculptures of Buddha found in the region. These sculptures were found in Thyaganur and Salem proper. Besides these, two sculptures preserved in the Dharmapuri museum are also illustrated. One of these sculptures is lying uncared for, in an open field. These sculptures of Buddha range in height from four feet to six feet.
The sculptures from Thyaganur are seated figures and are about six feet tall. The dimensions of the sculpture invariably suggest that the vihāra or the caitya in which they were housed were quite big in their size. This factor also suggests the prominence that Buddhism had attained during its heydays in the Salem region. These sculptures are very important from the point of view of rewriting the history of Buddhism in Tamilnadu.

Chapter twelve deals with the description of the temples. For this study, only twelve important temples have been taken for a detailed examination. They are important from the point of view of period, style, plan and architecture. Temples of the Nolamba, Chola, Hoysala and Vijayanagara periods are included. The only rock-cut shrines of the region are the Namakkal caves, dated to the Pallava period. They are described in quite a detailed manner. All other monuments are structural in nature and are all in dravidian mode. The architectural development and significance, sculptural decorations, chronology and political patronage are all the aspects that are dealt within this study. It is noteworthy here that despite the rule of the Hoysalas for over a century, the Hoysalas could not impose the Hoysala style of architecture over this region. This shows the high degree of rigidity the people of this region possessed in accepting elements that are new to their culture. In contrast to this, Karnataka accepted the Chola idiom of dravidian architecture, assimilated it and continued the Chola art idioms even after the exit of the Cholas from Karnataka. The study and description of these monuments made here is quite elaborate and technical, and such a study has not been attempted by anyone so far.

One relevant note, commonly applicable to the studies made under different headings of the chapters mentioned above, is the mode of study followed in this work. Each and every aspect of the temple architecture is studied item wise. Their textual prescriptions are first examined. Their technical aspects are also analysed and described. Comparative study of the existing architectural members with the typology or the textual prescription is made. Their antiquity,
origin and evolution are also discussed. Regional variations, if any, are also highlighted. In the light of the results of these studies, the study and analysis of the parallel architectural members of the temples of the region of our study are done. This approach for the study of the temples of the region is chronological in nature. Therefore, this attempt has successfully given a clear picture of the development of temple architecture of the Salem region.

The temples of the region which had humble beginnings during the last part of the 9th century under the patronage of the Nolambas, grew stage by stage into large temple complexes by the end of 16th century under the Vijayanagara rule. The temples, in the beginning, were simple in their execution, less ornate and archaic in certain technological aspects. The same during the Vijayanagara period, due to the development of building technology grew into a huge temple complex, having lofty pillars and piers and also high and broad ceilings of the nave, lofty gateways and gôpuras, all constructed with mixed medium and with a superior technical skill and dexterity.

These temples no doubt have their roots in orthodox textual prescriptions. In spite of it, one can find many deviations from the textual prescriptions. These have been ascribed to the individual taste, personal preferences, artistic abilities and the technological advancement achieved from time to time. Moreover the Texts themselves give a fair degree of freedom to the architects and the artists to construct the temples and decorate them in such a way that they look attractive and beautiful. It should also fit into the available material resources and technological skills at the same time be palatable to the taste of the builder and the society. Therefore, one can see good amount of agreements with and deviations from, the textual prescriptions in the construction of temples. Such deviations are not actually due to the liberties taken by the artist, but they were all sanctioned by the Texts.